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THE HOUSEHOLD CALENDAR

"Meal Schedules for School Days."

A radio talk by Mrs. Rowena Schmidt Carpenter, Bureau of Home Economics, for delivery in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour Tuesday, September 27, 1932, by a network of 47 associated NBC radio stations.

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Your children's food habits are important all the year around throughout early childhood and youth. But during the months of the school year when the freedom and fresh air of outdoor play are limited for your children and their indoor schedule may mean greater fatigue, their food habits are of more concern. It just isn't possible to over-emphasize the value of appetizing meals, made up of simple, nutritious dishes, eaten without scurry and rush.

We have an old slogan in some of our child feeding material in the Bureau, which may be familiar to you. It is "Start the day right with a good breakfast." I never hear a mother say she can't get her child to eat a good breakfast without having a vivid picture of a small boy I know who eats like a little toy wound up to go — through a big bowl of hot cereal, his orange or tomato juice, his milk, egg, and a slice of buttered toast, — breakfast enough for a six or eight year old, and he wants it all at three. Of course in breakfast, appetites like everything else in life, there are extremes. But there's no doubt that the average, normal, healthy child is hungry for his breakfast. He and his digestive system have had a long rest, and if he is up and ready in time so he doesn't feel under a nervous strain, the sight and smell of breakfast preparations should be all the stimulus his appetite needs. This matter of nervous strain and rushed schedules is very important. Sometimes we who hold the breakfast reins drive our families too hard. We must not rush each child through his meal, or remind him constantly how good his breakfast is for him, no matter how eager we are for him to eat it. We have to be "up and ready" early enough to have things prepared in plenty of time and to be calm and composed ourselves.

Some of the same rules that make for a good breakfast routine apply at noontime if the family comes home for a short lunch period. We must have something steaming hot that smells and looks good, and is ready, on the table, so there's no delay. Dishes that are nutritious and are easy to eat have a wonderful effect in the way of good dispositions and good school work.

It is really quite simple to look after the good nutrition of the children if they have all three meals at home. For lunch there is such a variety of good salads, of hot scalloped or creamed dishes, stews, and chowders and other milk soups. Any one of them is just about a meal in itself, needing only bread and butter and milk, and perhaps jelly or jam or fresh fruit to top it off. And the fine part of it for the mother is that these attractive luncheon dishes are so easily made by combining small portions of food left from the previous night's dinner. Of course some families find it better to reverse the order of meals, having the main one at noon with everybody at home, and serving for supper what I have just described as excellent luncheon dishes.

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But not all children live near enough school to come home in the middle of the day. If your children buy their noon meal at a lunchroom, find out what kind of dishes the daily bill of fare offers, and make suggestions for the children's choice. Otherwise, they are very likely to buy sweets, soft drinks, doughnuts, and cold sandwiches, having a much less suitable lunch than you would pack for them. A cafeteria managed by the school, with the aim of supplying suitable lunch dishes rather than of making money, is a real asset to the good health of the pupils.

But even if the lunch box must solve the noon meal problem, you can balance the day's diet for the children. Just run through your list of foods needed each day for good nutrition, and remember to include the different types when packing lunches. Children are delighted to find crisp celery, or crisp sticks of raw carrot, or a firm red tomato, in their boxes. These foods add so much in texture and flavor that the vitamins and minerals they supply are just sort of thrown in for good measure. That's true of the firm tart apple, bunch of grapes, pear, and dried fruit you add for variety. A small thermos bottle with cold or hot milk, cocoa, or hot soup helps to make the lunch of today different from that of the yesterdays, both in palatability and in food value. A jelly glass or covered paper container with an attractive mixed vegetable or fruit salad, or a custard or pudding lends pleasing variety from day to day too. As for sandwiches, there are so many kinds that the list is too long to begin.

To pack a lunch that is attractive and satisfying means another addition to an already full morning schedule. The only way you can possibly solve the problem easily is to plan ahead to have certain things prepared in the refrigerator, and to have plenty of waxed paper, paper napkins, and necessary lunch box containers ready for quick use.